

**Before the
Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D.C. 20554**

In the Matter of)	
)	
Advanced Methods to Target and Eliminate)	CG Docket No. 17-59
Unlawful Robocalls)	
)	

COMMENTS OF USTELECOM – THE BROADBAND ASSOCIATION

USTelecom – The Broadband Association (“USTelecom”)¹ submits these comments in response to the Federal Communications Commission’s (“Commission’s”) Sixth Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking in the above-referenced docket (“*Further Notice*”) regarding the best long-term approach to immediate notification of blocking.² As USTelecom previously explained, deploying SIP Codes 607 and 608 was – and remains – not viable in the near term.³ Instead, SIP Code 603 offers a pragmatic solution that provides callers with actionable information in the limited instances that calls blocked by voice service providers are legal.⁴

¹ USTelecom is the premier trade association representing service providers and suppliers for the communications industry. USTelecom members provide a full array of services, including broadband, voice, data, and video over wireline and wireless networks. Its diverse membership ranges from international publicly traded corporations to local and regional companies and cooperatives, serving consumers and businesses in every corner of the country. USTelecom leads the Industry Traceback Group (“ITG”), a collaborative effort of companies across the wireline, wireless, VoIP and cable industries actively working to trace and identify the source of illegal robocalls. The ITG was first designated by the Commission as the official U.S. robocall traceback consortium in July 2020.

² *Advanced Methods to Target and Eliminate Unlawful Robocalls – Petition for Reconsideration and Request for Clarification of USTelecom – The Broadband Association*, CG Docket No. 17-59, Order on Reconsideration, Sixth Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, and Waiver Order, FCC 21-126 (rel. Dec. 14, 2021) (“*Recon. Order*” when referring to the Order on Reconsideration; “*Further Notice*” when referring to the Sixth Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking).

³ See, e.g., Notice of Ex Parte Presentation of USTelecom – The Broadband Association, CG Docket No. 17-59, at 2 (filed Nov. 8, 2021) (“USTelecom Nov. 8, 2021 Ex Parte”).

⁴ See, e.g., Notice of Ex Parte Presentation of USTelecom – The Broadband Association, CG Docket No. 17-59, at 1 (filed Sept. 17, 2021).

Because the Commission’s Order on Reconsideration (“*Recon. Order*”) allows providers to rely on SIP Code 603 to meet the immediate notification requirement, it ensures that voice service providers can continue to use analytics to block illegal and unwanted calls while providing immediate notice to callers – an unequivocal win for consumers.⁵

The *Further Notice* seeks comment on whether and how to transition away from the use of SIP Code 603.⁶ It also asks whether SIP Code 603 requires additional modifications to make it useful for callers.⁷ USTelecom and its members continue to believe that SIP Code 603 currently presents the best and most pragmatic solution to provide callers with actionable information as ubiquitous use of 603 response messages for analytics-based blocking will clearly identify patterns associated with such blocking.⁸ USTelecom and its members also continue to engage the calling community and explore if and how SIP Code 603 can be modified to provide better information to callers. It is likely that the SIP Code 603 standard can be modified to include standardized information in a header that distinguishes between analytics-based blocking and other call declinations and then deployed in providers’ networks in a far shorter timeline than it would take to revise, finalize, operationalize, and ultimately deploy SIP Codes 607 and 608.⁹

⁵ *Recon. Order* ¶ 13.

⁶ *Further Notice* ¶ 44.

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ *See, e.g.,* USTelecom Nov. 8, 2021 Ex Parte at 2.

⁹ SIP Code 607/608 would be an entirely new message, not just a new response code. Therefore, in addition to standardization, deploying SIP Code 607/608 capabilities requires software development by equipment vendors. In contrast, modifying SIP Code 603 to rely on an existing field to provide more information likely can be achieved through changes that do not necessarily amount to entirely new software development.

As the Commission moves forward, it should encourage stakeholders to focus on identifying the most pragmatic way to meet callers' needs without overburdening (and thus risking) providers' blocking programs. The on-paper, theoretical appeal of a new response message dedicated exclusively to analytics-based call blocking is clear.¹⁰ In practice, however, establishing new SIP response codes to achieve that result may not significantly enhance caller notification. For instance, given the continued presence of TDM in providers' networks, any SIP Code 607 or 608 response message (or SIP Code 603 for that matter) that transitions from IP to TDM and back to IP will present as a different message that will no longer be indicative of analytics-based blocking.¹¹ Moreover, many callers' equipment and systems may need substantial upgrades (or even replacement) to receive the yet-to-be-finalized SIP Codes 607 and 608, whereas such equipment should largely be able to receive SIP Codes 603. Finally, it is possible that enhancements to SIP Code 603 can provide callers with equally or more actionable information than contemplated by SIP Codes 607 and 608.

USTelecom members are investigating all path forwards, including whether SIP Code 603 response messages are in fact meeting callers' needs; whether SIP Code 603 can and should be modified to ensure that 603 responses do so; and what would be required to

¹⁰ There appears to be confusion across the industry regarding what is expected respectively of SIP Code 607 and SIP Code 608, particularly when accounting for the Commission's confirmation that immediate notification to callers is necessary only for calls blocked pursuant to any analytics programs. *See Recon. Order* ¶ 23. For instance, the *Recon. Order* states that one commenter "argues that SIP Code 607 will provide relevant information to callers when a consumer initiates the blocking of their calls," which appears to be broader than analytics-based blocking subject to the requirement. *Id.* ¶ 29; *see also* Reply Comments of USTelecom – The Broadband Association, CG Docket No. 17-59, at 6 (filed June 14, 2021) (explaining that SIP Code 607 currently is not intended to be a standard to inform the caller about blocking), *cited by Further Notice* ¶ 43 n.117.

¹¹ *See Advanced Methods to Target and Eliminate Unlawful Robocalls*, CG Docket No. 17-59, Fourth Report and Order, FCC 20-187 ¶ 57 n.135 (rel. Dec. 30, 2020) (noting that IETF documentation recommends that ISUP code 21 be mapped to either SIP Code 403 "Forbidden" or SIP Code 603 "Decline," and that it may be impossible for voice service providers to determine the appropriate code when receiving cause code 21).

standardize and deploy SIP Codes 607 and 608 capabilities in their networks and then ensure such messages can be transmitted end-to-end without creating new issues (*e.g.*, retries in response to the codes). In the end, even if it must be modified, if in fact SIP Code 603 can meet callers' needs more quickly and at lower complexity and cost than required to deploy SIP Codes 607 and 608, it would be unreasonable for the Commission to require SIP Codes 607/608. The Commission therefore should encourage stakeholders to continue to work together to explore which approaches will best, most quickly, and most efficiently provide actionable information to callers.

Respectfully submitted,

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